



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FEDERAL JURY IN DEL RIO CONVICTS DEFENDANT ON ALIEN SMUGGLING CHARGES

U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton announced today that 49-year-old Jose Luis Mendez, a United States Citizen living in Nueva Rosita, Coahuila, Mexico, faces between three and ten years in federal prison after a jury convicted him this afternoon of five immigration related charges.

The jury convicted Mendez of one count of conspiracy to transport illegal aliens, two counts of transporting illegal aliens and two counts of aiding and abetting the bringing of illegal aliens into the United States.

Evidence presented during trial revealed that in July 2006, several illegal aliens paid \$1,500 each to be smuggled into the United States and transported to San Antonio. On July 25, 2006, Mendez picked up the illegal aliens in Nueva Rosita and Nava, Coahuila, Mexico, and transported them to the border near Guerrero, Coahuila, Mexico. Mendez subsequently crossed into the United States at the Eagle Pass Port of Entry then drove to Carrizo Springs where he lead another vehicle to the predetermined pick up site. After retrieving five illegal aliens on July 28, 2006, both vehicles were stopped by U.S. Border Patrol. Five individuals, including Mendez, were arrested and charged in this case. The other four—Hugo Anibal Garza of San Antonio; Rogelio Sepulveda, Jr., of Crystal City, Texas; Felipe Flores of Crystal City; and, Fidencio Escobedo Aguirre from Nava—entered guilty pleas prior to jury selection.

On February 12, 2007, Sepulveda was sentenced to eight months in federal prison. On February 13, 2007, Garza was sentenced to time served. Flores and Aguirre, who each face up to ten years in federal prison, are awaiting sentencing scheduled for March 12, 2007. Mendez is scheduled to be sentenced on June 4, 2007.

This case was investigated by the United States Customs and Border Protection. Assistant United States Attorney Rick Bennett is prosecuting this case on behalf of the government.

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